
OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-
 - (a) **Special Meetings** – Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee have met on three occasions as a special meeting to give consideration to :-
 - (i) The Local Development Framework Core Strategy Preferred Options;
 - (ii) Cycling Through the Town Centre; and
 - (iii) Supported Bus Service Contracts 2009-2014

As a Scrutiny Committee we also had Stalls at Talking Together Events on the Theme Cycling Through the Town Centre and Supports Bus Service Contracts 2009-2014.
 - (b) **Work Programme 2008/09** – We have agreed our Work Programme for the 2008/09 Municipal Year and will continue to update and add to our Work Programme throughout the year. We also examined Cabinet’s Forward Plan for particular areas of interest and concern to be included within our Work Programme and also further areas for undertaking Task and Finish Review Groups.
 - (c) **Annual Parks and Countryside Visit** – Following Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee’s site visits to Parks and Countryside Sites in 2008 we received a report on the discussion points raised which included, in relation to the Parks, the need for fencing of green spaces to restrict unlawful use, use of the parks for more organised activities and the ways of increasing zoning within parks to encourage wildlife, use of the parks as part of the cycle network and the issue of staffing, anti-social behaviour and CCTV. Members also visited the wild spaces known as Geneva Woods Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Maidendale LNR and the Cocker Beck proposed LNR. Members were advised of improvements to the various LNRs, difficulties encountered on various LNR’s and of the work of the County Durham Environmental Trust, one of the Council’s Partners, at Maidendale LNR.
 - (d) **Update on the Delivery of the Open Spaces Strategy** – We received a report on the progress made in delivering the actions outlined in the Darlington Open Spaces Strategy, the main policy document by which the Council makes decisions on its open spaces provision. It was produced in response to changes in planning guidance, whereby assessment of open land had to be made by Local Authorities and following an extensive period of consultation and survey work. The Open Spaces Action Plan 2007-2012 was also given consideration.

- (e) **Annual Tour of Sites 2008** – Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee, as part of its remit, undertakes Joint Site Visits with Planning Applications Committee to enable Members of the Committees to visit recently completed developments within the Borough that have been approved by the Planning Committee. It is an opportunity to assess the success or otherwise of schemes that have been reported to Planning Committee and an opportunity to learn from the experience of seeing developments in their built form.
- (f) **Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Darlington – Status, Condition and Gazetteer** – Following Committee request, we were advised on the status, condition and locations of Darlington’s Scheduled Ancient Monuments of which there are 20 in total. Ten of these monuments are classed as ‘high risk’ by English Heritage who have also made a number of recommendations on which Darlington Borough Council could act, as reasonably possible, prioritising those Monuments at most risk. We were pleased to note that work is ongoing on preservation of the Monuments.
- (g) **Conservation Area Appraisals in Darlington** – Again, following Committee request, we received a report on the progress of up to date appraisals for Darlington’s Conservation Areas which helped in the achievement of high quality and distinctive development and regeneration. Appraisals form the basis for management plans and can be a catalyst for heritage based funding bids. We were advised that 16 Conservation areas had been designated between 1968 and 1997, with a recent programme of works updating six appraisals. A target of two appraisals per year was hoped to be achieved in line with the programme of Conservation Appraisals.
- (h) **Gladstone Street and Duke Street Road Markings** – We were advised of the work recently undertaken to improve the condition of road markings in the Gladstone Street and Duke Street areas following Police concerns on their condition resulting in no enforcement action being taken. Following consultation with the Police they are now satisfied that illegal parking on the roads can be enforced.
- (i) **Policy Review - Minimisation Review Group** – Town Centre Traders had been invited to attend a meeting of the Group on 21st November however due to their non-attendance another meeting has been arranged for January 2009.
- (j) **Skinnergate Task and Finish Group** – Further meetings of this Group have been delayed until the maintenance to the road markings within the Pedestrian Heart and Skinnergate have been completed.
- (k) **Grass Verges Review – Action Plan** – We were pleased to receive an update on the Action Plan relating to verge hardening works around the Borough together with the list of prioritised areas. We will continue to monitor the Action Plan.

2. Since the last meeting of Council, the Chair of the Committee has attended the following meetings:-

- Various briefings with Officers.
- Monitoring and Co-ordination Group

- The LSP Greener Darlington Theme Group.

Chair of Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee